



Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Planning Newsletter

April, 2000

Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Update

On January 25th, we presented the proposed study area (see map on pg. 3) for the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands to the Natural Resources Board. The Board agreed with the Department's plans to explore what opportunities may exist for future Department acquisition and/or boundary expansions within this study area.

Our first step has been to meet with the 21 towns within this study area. Our purpose in meeting with the town boards has been to update them on our progress on this planning effort, begin a conversation with these local units of government on how they want their town to look in future years, and talk about what opportunities there might be for future Department purchases or partnerships to protect, manage, and enhance the natural resources along this Lower Wolf River Bottomlands corridor.

We've met with well over 1/2 of the towns in the proposed study area, we expect to have met with all of the 21 townships by mid-April. In general, the feedback we've received from the towns has been that this is a good step in beginning a working rela-

tionship with the towns. Some towns are working on a comprehensive town plan, others are thinking about initiating some kind of effort. But more importantly, we've heard that towns do want to be involved or informed as we continue through this planning process. They, like you, want to know what's next. So, here's a quick look at where we are and a suggestion on how we might proceed.

We held open houses to introduce this planning effort and have identified issues (Phase 1 of the planning process). Also we've been collecting background information on the resources (i. e. biotic inventory, identifying other existing recreation opportunities, talking with town boards to find out what's important to them).

The next phase in the planning process is writing a draft vision and goals for the properties (please refer to What are Vision & Goals article for more detail). We would like to propose that this planning team make an attempt at a first draft of vision and goals for the properties and then send you a draft to review. We think that this would reflect what we heard from the town boards, that is, they would like to stay informed of our progress and participate in

this planning process by reviewing materials and providing feedback. **If you are interested in being more involved in helping us with a draft vision and goals, please contact Jill Mrotek at 920/492-5830 to discuss how you can be involved by April 17, 2000.**

If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions please contact Jill Mrotek.

Provided we are able to move ahead as proposed, we will try to have a first draft vision and goals for your review by the beginning of summer.



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Trips at the Navarino Wildlife Area

The following trips will be sponsored through the Natural Resources Foundation. Space is limited and registration is required for each trip. For more information contact the Natural Resources Foundation at (608) 264-8548.

☞ April 8, 2000 Sandhill Crane Migration

☞ August 5, 2000 Navarino Wagon Prairie Tour

☞ September 23, 2000 Canoe Trip on the Wolf River

What are Vision & Goals?

A vision statement is a concise statement of the project's overall purpose. It is consistent with statutory direction, Natural Resources Board policies, division and program strategic plans and other appropriate guidance. It provides a broad description of the property's character, capacity and opportunities.

Property goals are a series of statements describing desired outcomes or future conditions. They describe how the vision for the project will be accomplished and are expressed in broad, general terms that are timeless, in that there is no specific date by which the goal is to be achieved.

The vision statement and goals form the skeletal framework for the third planning phase -- the development of detailed objec-

tives and alternatives for the property as a whole and for individual management areas within the property.

Those objectives and alternatives will be developed in the next phase of this master planning effort and will add the detail and specifics not present in visions and goals.

The following example illustrates the flow from a broad description through a general statement about a desired future condition to a specific means of accomplishing that condition.

Vision: "The Missinaibi State Forest supports a wide variety of plant and animal species. The forest also provides diverse opportunities for people to use the forest."

Goal: "Enhance, restore, and pro-

tect native plant and animal communities within the Missinaibi State Forest.

Goal: "Provide a full array of quality outdoor recreation opportunities."

Objective: "Restore large blocks of prairie chicken habitat."

Objective: "Provide approximately 450 miles of groomed dogsled trails."

"Nature provides exceptions to every rule."

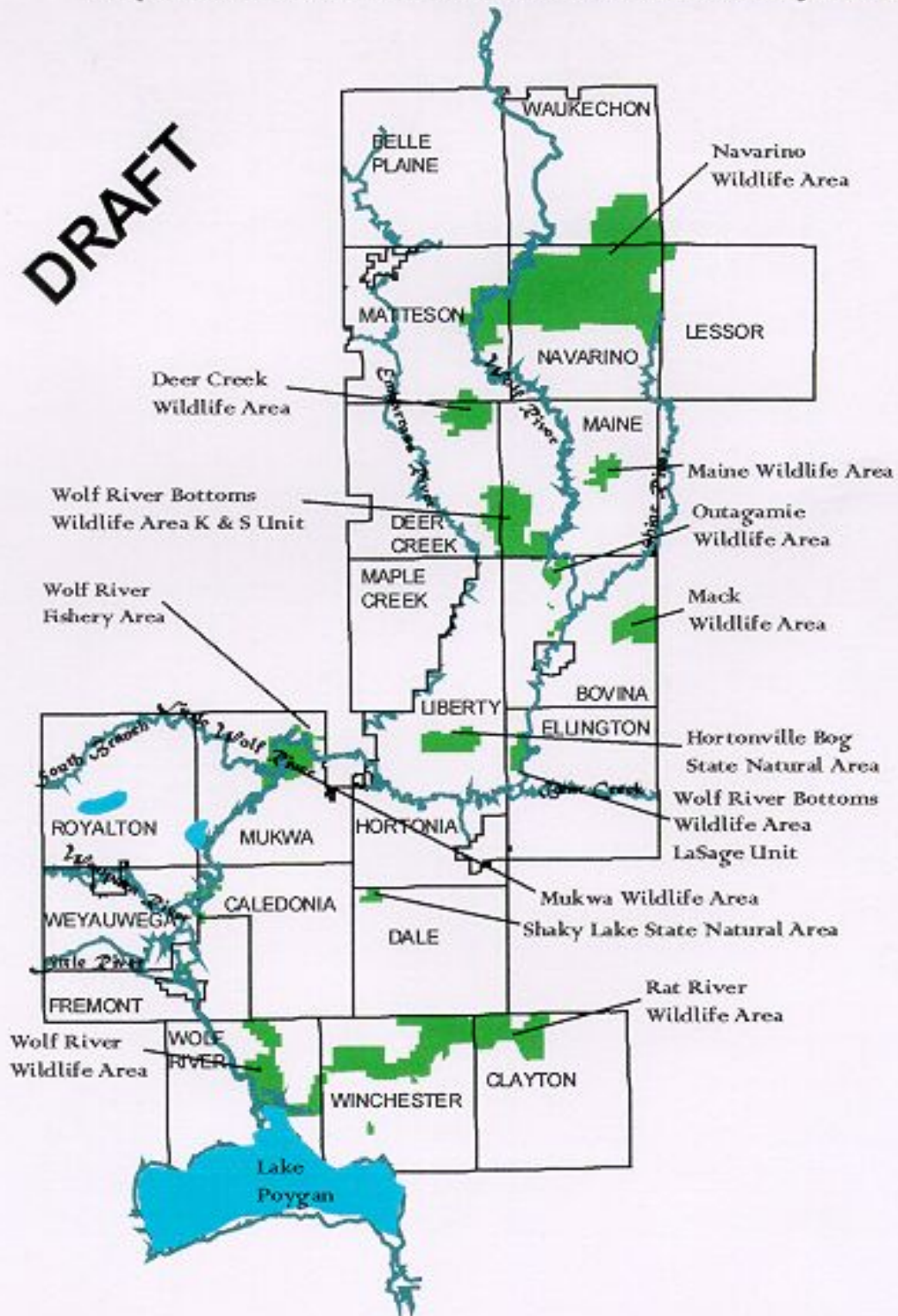
- Margaret Fuller (1810 - 1850)



Shoreline along the Wolf River

Proposed Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Study Area

DRAFT



 Townships
 Major Wolf River Tributaries
 DNR Project Boundaries

0 3 6 Miles

1:500,000

Map provided by WDNR Bureau of Drinking Water and Groundwater 10-14-89.



Boundaries, What does that mean?

Boundaries, boundary lines, project boundaries, acquisition boundaries. A lot of terms with different meanings or ideas to different people. When the DNR refers to a property or project boundary we are talking about an area of land identified for potential acquisition in a master plan or feasibility study. Land within that boundary may or may not be owned by the DNR. Often times there are private landowners within that boundary. How is that boundary decided, who makes that decision, and what happens when that boundary line is drawn? A lot of questions, misunderstanding, and fears may come up. We would like to take the opportunity to discuss this with you and others. To begin that discussion, following are some questions and answers on "boundaries" in a master planning effort.

Q: How do you determine a project boundary? A boundary is established on a map to focus attention on the area likely to contain the most important natural resources, other reasons may also include but not limited to improve public access, provide for recreational and educational opportunities. Project boundaries are established areas that the DNR may be interested in purchasing over a long period of time (from willing sellers). Most boundary lines follow roads, ownership lines, and major geographic features. Most major development is left out of the boundary area to avoid high cost sites. However, it is not possible to eliminate all development without producing an extremely complicated map. Ultimately, where a boundary line is drawn is determined by completing a preliminary inventory of natural resources, talking with local

people who are familiar and interested in this land, and additionally we will use information we received from the open houses in September 1999.

Establishment of a new property or boundary expansions must be approved by the Natural Resources Board (DNR policy-making board). New properties must also receive Governor approval. In either instance, public interests are taken into account.

Q: What does this mean to me?

As a citizen interested in your environment, land use practices are one of the most important issues facing you. Increasing development pressures along the Wolf River and surrounding area are being felt. Open areas once attractive to wildlife are becoming modified or are threatened to becoming lost. Protecting our wildlife and fishery resources within the river corridor is important to great number of individuals who live here. Demands for public outdoor recreation opportunities are increasing as well.

Looking at potentially expanding state ownership by enlarging existing property boundaries means that you'll have an opportunity to address these issues now, while resources and alternatives are available. You will be proactive in your decision making with regards to natural resources here in your town, you'll be protecting and enhancing them, now and in the future.

Q: If land is in a boundary, does that mean it will automatically be purchased? A boundary represents a long-term DNR ownership goal for a given property. DNR land buying is done on a willing-seller-willing-buyer basis. There are no forced sales. Also, it's too

early in the planning process to know who would participate in land buying at this time. Towns and counties, in partnership with DNR could be involved. River Associations, land trusts, non-profit conservation organizations and private landowners (by donations or agreements) may also participate.

Q: Who pays taxes on DNR

lands? Under Wisconsin state law (s.70.114, Stats.), DNR pays a fair share of aid on all land purchased since Jan. 1, 1992. The DNR makes payment in lieu of property taxes at the same level as any other property owner. Therefore, the potential impact on property taxes from DNR ownership of land is negligible. In addition, each town, village or city gains the benefits of natural resource protection and outdoor recreation that public lands offer to all.

Lands purchased by the DNR prior to 1992 are enrolled in two previous aid-in-lieu-of-tax programs (s.70.113, Stats.).

We, the planning team, would like to draft some criteria that would be used in identifying any potential boundary expansions within the Proposed Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Study Area. We would then meet to discuss these draft criteria and questions about boundaries in early June. **If you have any concerns regarding this or are interested in helping us draft some criteria please contact, Jill Mrotek at 920/492-5830 by April 17, 2000.**



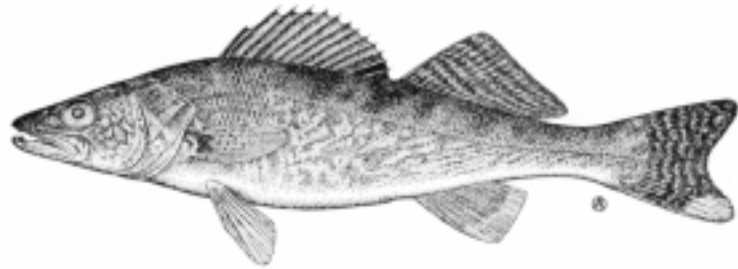
Walleyes on the Wolf

Walleye (*Stizostedion vitreum*) are found in a variety of habitats across Wisconsin. Here in north-east Wisconsin many walleye migrate out of Lake Winnebago and travel upstream on the upper Fox and Wolf Rivers as far as 90 miles to seasonally flooded marshes where they lay their eggs and then return to the lakes downstream.

Lake Winnebago walleye are one of the few strains that spawn in marshes. The spawning marshes along the Wolf River are unique areas with distinctive characteristics that make them attractive to walleye. These marshes typically have large grassy areas covered by several feet of water during spring flooding. They require an inlet to allow flooding, and an outlet to attract walleye into them. The fish lay their eggs over the flooded grass, which the eggs adhere to. (The eggs usually take about two weeks to hatch.) The flow of water keeps the eggs oxygenated and free of sediment, and allows the fry, once they are hatched, to drift back out of the marsh into the river and on down to the lakes.

Walleye spawning on the Wolf River usually begins in early to mid-April when water temperatures reach 44-46 °F. This year walleye spawning may begin earlier due to a warm spring. In addition to warm weather, water levels in the Wolf River influence where spawning occurs. Currently water levels are below past year averages on the Wolf. If water levels remain low, a poor hatch could result because many of the marshes will be inadequately flooded and/or inaccessible to the fish. Thus, most of the walleye will spawn in poorer quality habitat.

One or two poor hatches would



not have a noticeable impact on the walleye population because of good yearclasses produced during much of the last decade. Several poor hatches in a row would be most noticeable to anglers once those fish reached a catchable size. This situation occurred in the early 1990's when angler catches of walleye were low because of poor hatches resulting from droughts during the late 1980's.

One of the most effective ways of maintaining good walleye num-

bers is to continue restoring and protecting their spawning marshes. This improves the chances that, even in a low water year, at least some marshes might be useable. It is important that we recognize these walleye spawning marshes and comply with signs of "No Entry Zone". This is done to protect walleye while they are actually spawning, and to prevent disturbance of their eggs.

Do You Know Someone Who Might Be Interested In the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Planning Effort?

Encourage them to be added to our

mailing list by contacting:

Jill Mrotek

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WDNR

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****Important, Please Read****

*It's important that you contact Jill Mrotek, 920/492-5830 or email mrotej@dnr.state.wi.us
by April 17, 2000 to let us know if you are interested in being more involved
in drafting a vision and goals and/or developing criteria that could
be used in considering potential property boundary expansions.*

*See the articles on the front page (Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Update)
and page 4 (Boundaries, What does that mean) for a further explanation.*

We look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you